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Director

## County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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January 16, 2007

To: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chairman  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Chair Pro Tem  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Patricia S. Ploehn, LCSW  
Director

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ploehn", written over the printed name and title.

### **SEPTEMBER 19, 2006 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #65-B AND AMENDMENT TO ITEM #65-B—MOTION BY SUPERVISOR ZEV YAROSLAVSKY RE: METHAMPHETAMINE**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

On September 19, 2006, the Board of Supervisors instructed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Directors of Public Health, Mental Health, Public Social Services, Department of Children and Family Services, the Sheriff, and other County agencies, as appropriate, to assess all existing County contracts, services and resources dedicated to addressing the methamphetamine epidemic and report back in 90 days. This information should be incorporated in the development of the comprehensive strategy. Additionally, the comprehensive strategy should identify specific goals, objectives and outcome measures for dealing with the epidemic. This strategy should also include specific recommendations for better data collection, information exchange and coordination across county agencies and with community groups and service providers.

- Instructed the Director of Public Health's Alcohol and Drug Program Administration, and Office of AIDS Programs and Policy, and the Director of Mental Health, to report back within 90 days on a comprehensive strategy for methamphetamine (meth) use prevention and intervention and include in the report an overview of meth use in Los Angeles County and best practices for preventing meth use and treating meth users, particularly within targeted populations, such as communities of color;
- Instructed the County's Legislative Advocates in Sacramento to identify and support legislation that would fund and expand the County's research and prevention and treatment efforts on meth addiction;

- Instructed the Director of Public Health to expand the membership of the Methamphetamine Work Group to include additional advocates against crystal meth use, including community service agencies serving at-risk populations; and
- Instructed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Directors of Public Health, Mental Health, Public Social Services, Department of Children and Family Services, the Sheriff, and other County agencies, as appropriate, to assess all existing County contracts, services and resources dedicated to addressing the meth epidemic with the information to be incorporated in the development of the comprehensive strategy, and report back to the Board within 90 days with the comprehensive strategy to include:
  - The identification of specific goals; objectives and outcome measures for dealing with this epidemic; and
  - Specific recommendations for better data collection, information exchange and coordination across County agencies and with community groups and service providers.

#### **SCOPE OF PROBLEM:**

The clandestine manufacturers and distribution of methamphetamine and other drugs such as PCP and Ecstasy, has created a public health and safety crisis in Los Angeles County. As a result of the extreme danger of fire/explosions and chemical contamination that exist at these sites, the risk to children found at these locations is extremely high. Further, children found to have been exposed to these conditions require that a more specific and thorough health assessment and treatments be performed. Exposing a child to the manufacturing, trafficking and use of narcotics is criminal conduct, and a response by law enforcement and social services agencies is essential to addressing the child's health and welfare.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has been actively involved in addressing the methamphetamine issue through several avenues, specifically the Drug Endangered Children's (DEC) program and the Multi-Agency Response Team (MART) which have received local, state and national recognition. The recent national rise of methamphetamine abuse, its manufacturers and the dangers surrounding its illegal distribution has placed initiatives such as Point of Engagement (POE), MART and DEC on the cutting edge of social service best practice for actively engaging in strategies to curtail the methamphetamine effect on families and children. In addition, DCFS has established several co-location sites with law enforcement agencies to strengthen collaboration and has plans to expand our co-location efforts even further.

### **SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES/SOLUTION(S):**

Through the use of programs such as: Point of Engagement (POE), the Drug Endangered Children's (DEC) program and the Multi-Agency Response Team (MART) immediate needs to provide assessment, intervention, treatment and prevention are being addressed. A detailed list of these services includes the following:

#### **POINT OF ENGAGEMENT**

The Department's new service delivery system, Point of Engagement (POE) addresses the assessment and service components of families with issues related to methamphetamine. POE focuses on providing comprehensive investigations that include up front assessments in the areas of domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse. These comprehensive assessments provide in-depth information on families affected by substance use, including methamphetamine, by identifying the scope of abuse and the recommended treatment strategies. POE offers families the ability to maintain children safely in their home, when possible, while intensive services are being provided. POE also includes more thorough assessments of detained children so that appropriate case plans can be developed and timely reunification ensured.

POE utilizes community partners, public agencies and the faith-based community to provide support, voluntary and intensive services, to ensure child safety and provide families with the services they need. POE utilizes family support agencies contracted through the County to provide drug awareness classes, parenting and mentorship programs. For those families in need of more direct services, DCFS has contracts with family preservation agencies to provide in-home services and link the family to outpatient drug treatment programs. Families with more intensive service needs are connected to in-patient treatment in the community while reunification services are provided.

With POE, both community and public agencies, along with the families, collaborate to develop the families' case plans. Families know up front what is needed to successfully address the issues identified. POE also collaborates with local law enforcement agencies, Sheriff's, Probation and Parole Departments to share information and coordinate services. POE has been implemented countywide and has demonstrated success in maintaining families together and reunifying them more timely, including families impacted by methamphetamine abuse.

#### **DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN'S (DEC) PROGRAM**

In January 1997, through a state-funded grant that provided technical support and monies, the Los Angeles County Drug Endangered Children's Task Force was created. DCFS partnered with the District Attorney's Office - Major Narcotics Division, the Los Angeles - Interagency Metropolitan Police Apprehension Crime Task (LA IMPACT)

Force and Allied Laboratory Enforcement Response Team (ALERT) to address the growing methamphetamine problem. In addition, auxiliary agencies were added to the Task Force to represent the medical field, academic research, fire fighters and many others. The outcome has resulted in over 1000 children being rescued out of methamphetamine clandestine drug laboratories. This number continues to rise as more children are also being rescued from other types of clandestine drug laboratories.

In January 2003, the successful outcomes of the LA DEC Team prompted the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) and their Operations Safe Streets Bureau (OSS) to request a similar partnership in the rescue of gang endangered children. The mission of the collaboration has been to increase both public and child safety through joint specialized responses, at the time of warrant service and parole/probation sweeps, that target active gang members engaging in criminal activity with a direct nexus to child endangerment. This partnership called for five Los Angeles Sheriff's Department stations with a high concentration of gang activity to contact DCFS in advance of Special Operations in order to secure a successful outcome. The partnership immediately led to the rescue of 144 children being identified for specialized protective services coming out of volatile gang environments. Approximately 60% of these homes had visible and accessible weapons and narcotics with methamphetamine falling second only to marijuana in prevalence.

#### DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN'S COORDINATOR

DCFS maintains a DEC Coordinator position whose responsibility is to continue to facilitate the Department's specialized response to methamphetamine and other clandestine drug laboratories discovered countywide. The DEC Coordinator is the lead investigator at clandestine drug laboratory investigations, who is responsible for conducting in-service training regarding meth and substance abuse recognition for the Department. The Coordinator conducts presentations at local, state and national conferences, conducts seminars for community service providers, and collaborates with research institutions to collect statistical data for design and analysis.

#### MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

In January of 2004, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the Department's, Multi-Agency Response Team Initiative, to create a highly trained and specialized DCFS team of investigators that would be co-located within local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, to respond to high profile criminal cases that have a child endangerment nexus. Children are identified for MART Team investigation at the time of primarily narcotic, gang and weapons-related warrant service, parole/probation sweeps and also at the time of law enforcement specialized investigations that have sensitive intelligence.

During the past two and a half years, over 60% of MART operations have found the presence of narcotics for the purposes of use, sales, possession, trafficking, distribution, brokering and manufacturing.

Methamphetamine was the prominent drug of choice found in these identified homes second only to Marijuana. At present, the MART Team has rescued more than 3,000 children from these dangerous drug-exposed environments.

#### **DEC MEDICAL PROTOCOL FOR METH AND OTHER CLANDESTINE DRUG LABORATORY EXPOSURE**

The Los Angeles DEC team in partnership with the California and National DEC Alliances, have created a medical protocol that is utilized by both Martin Luther King Hospital (MLK) and Children's Hub and Huntington Memorial Hospital Emergency Room. The purpose of the DEC Medical Protocol is to ensure that the appropriate special medical needs of children identified at meth labs is implemented. Both hospitals have long-standing collaborative agreements with DCFS to provide individual exposure and toxicology screens to each child brought to their facility after having been found in toxic, meth lab environments. DCFS DEC and MART staff attend regular meetings with the social work and medical staff of both hospitals to continue fostering the supportive relationship between our agencies and to share information to improve our services.

#### **LONG-TERM STRATEGIES/SOLUTION(S):**

In addition to providing services meant to address the immediate concerns of children found to be at risk due to the hazards associated with methamphetamine use/abuse, the Department has also implemented a number of additional long-term strategies aimed at integrating best practice methods, local/ national research findings, co-location of social workers and local/national agency policy and training collaborations. A detailed list of these services includes the following:

#### **NIDA-UCLA/ DEC METHAMPHETAMINE PILOT STUDY**

As part of a two-year grant from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), the DCFS DEC Program and the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Integrated Substance Abuse Program (ISAP), have partnered to conduct a pilot study targeting children rescued from clandestine methamphetamine drug laboratories in the Los Angeles County. Over the past year, the DCFS DEC Coordinator has been collecting retrospective data using a sample of 100 DCFS DEC cases. Variables collected for this study will examine multiple outcomes to include reunification efforts, recidivism, type and scale of meth lab, weapons found, final case disposition and demographic information and much more. This study will provide additional insight into this growing problem and will also have national/international implications with the high probability that more methamphetamine and DEC-related studies larger in scale will follow.

### THE CALIFORNIA DEC ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIP

The Los Angeles County DCFS - DEC Program is one of the contributing and founding members of the California Drug Endangered Children's (DEC) Alliance that is sponsored and supported by the California Governor's - Office of Emergency Services (OES). The DCFS DEC/MART Coordinating Supervisor holds a position on the executive committee of this Alliance. The California DEC Alliance is comprised of local, state and federal lead agency members who operate within the state and who are tasked with addressing the problems facing children living in meth and chronic drug environments. Through funding support by the California Alliance-OES, the alliance has provided technical support to new and emerging California DEC counties; and is in the latter stages of completing a 2007 revised California DEC Manual for meth lab and drug investigation response and has established a California DEC Alliance website. The California DEC Alliance (CA DEC) also conducts statewide training in different California counties to effectively address the impact that meth and other drugs are having on agencies across the State. The CA DEC Alliance training team is composed of members representing agencies from law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution, medical and the psychosocial field. Representatives from these disciplines, probation, parole, public health, medical clinics, industrial hygienist, education and many more participate. As part of this effort, the Los Angeles County DCFS DEC Coordinator and DEC/MART Coordinating Supervisor are among the selected few who conduct training in the current best-practice models of child abuse investigation and treatment of children and families impacted by methamphetamine production, sales, trafficking and use. Since the creation of the CA DEC Alliance, the Department has approved for its two DEC primary representatives to conduct more than 50 training sessions within the County of Los Angeles.

### THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

DCFS' DEC and MART Programs Coordinating Supervisor, is one of the founding members of the National DEC Alliance. The National DEC Alliance is one of the most recognized authorities, both nationally and internationally, in the meth and children arena, as well as for the impact it has on government services and the environment. Through federal funding from the Community Orientated Policing Services (COPS) and Office of Victims and Crime (OVC) initially administered by the US Attorney's Office and now recently (2006) established National DEC Resource Center in Denver, CO, the Center works in collaboration with local, state and federal government agencies to develop effective strategies to significantly curtail the wide impact that meth and other controlled substances are having on government resources and community by tracking drug trends in use, production and distribution. Through research and evidence based practice, the Resource Center is providing national technical and training support to public and private entities to first address the immediate needs of health and safety to children, families, communities and First Responders who have a need to enter the volatile environments of drug use, its production and trafficking.

Research on the long-term effects of meth and other drugs are now underway and will soon be incorporated into the method of approach and planning that will help facilitate its evolving tactics and policy.

Through this vital and direct connection to the National Alliance, the Los Angeles County DCFS has established itself as a leader in the fight to recognize the overt and hidden dangers of meth use, production and distribution.

#### THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY METHAMPHETAMINE WORK GROUP PARTNERSHIP

The Los Angeles County DCFS DEC and MART Programs contributed to the formation of the Los Angeles County Methamphetamine Work Group where the DCFS DEC Coordinator sits as a member. This work group is an assessment and task oriented multi-agency collaborative effort. The work group has met quarterly since November of 2005 and seeks to bring all the county agencies responsible for addressing the social, epidemiological, physical and cultural impact of methamphetamine abuse on the residents of Los Angeles County. Dr. Jonathan Fielding, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, chairs the Methamphetamine Work Group Partnership.

#### DEC TRAININGS AND METH AWARENESS PRESENTATIONS

The DEC and MART Programs have provided training to more than 50 community-based organizations and public and private agencies. The trainings are specialized and address the direct impact narcotic abuse and methamphetamine has on the community. The DCFS DEC and MART Supervising and Coordinator positions serve as the lead in facilitating these multi-discipline training/workshop presentations to such organizations as: foster family agencies and licensed foster care providers, the medical community and in-patient and out-patient substance abuse treatment centers. Others receiving this training include toxicology organizations, government sponsored task force committees and the academic and higher education community.

#### DEC IN-SERVICE TRAINING PRESENTATIONS TO DEPARTMENT STAFF

As part of the DCFS Mission to protect staff and the children and families they serve, the Department sponsors meth and DEC in-service trainings to each of the Service Planning Area (SPA) Offices. The training is provided by the LA County DEC Team and/or its Coordinator and Supervising Coordinator positions. These trainings focus on safety and awareness, how to conduct specialized investigations, and providing resources and networking opportunities to service providers.

#### METHAMPHETAMINE ABUSE FOCUSED INTERVENTION EFFORTS

Through the on-going development of collaborative partnerships initiated by the Department and the Los Angeles County Methamphetamine Work Group, hands-on treatment resources for parents and young adults who are suffering from addiction to

methamphetamine have been cultivated. The DCFS DEC Coordinator maintains a regularly updated list of open treatment beds and referral resources for families dealing with methamphetamine abuse. In addition, through a community partnership with the Los Angeles County Alcohol and Drug Program Administration, updated literature and training program materials specifically related to the problems of methamphetamine use, addiction and manufacturing have been provided to the DEC and MART Teams for distribution to clients and families who they identified at the time of specialized investigation.

#### INTERNAL MART/DEC TEAM RESEARCH

The DCFS DEC and MART Programs are making efforts to upgrade its internal statistical database for the purposes of outcome evaluation and to seek future grant opportunities that will bring evidence based integrity in practice to these operations. This data will also be made available to collaborative partners in their efforts to seek grants that demonstrate a working relationship with the DCFS DEC and MART Programs. The DEC and MART Programs have also established partnerships with the Department's own Substance Abuse Services and Research section to provide for the development of data-sets for current and future DCFS research projects. In addition, through the DEC and MART co-location partnership at the California Department of Justice, statistics are gathered and shared utilizing data collected at the scene of law enforcement and DCFS-DEC joint investigations. These findings are then tallied on a statewide and national level to determine criminological, statistical and epidemiological drug trends.

#### THE MART/DEC FORENSIC SOCIAL WORK INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

For the past three years, the DCFS MART team has provided field supervision and placement to Master of Social Work (MSW) students from the University of California Los Angeles, University of Southern California and the California State Universities of Los Angeles and Long Beach. The students who participate are given forensic social work experience while they shadow DCFS MART and DEC team members, at specialized field operations and attend Drug Endangered Children training activities. As part of the field placement, the students remain housed at the California Department of Justice where they gain advanced training experience prior to placement and/or return to designated DCFS SPA Offices.

#### CO-LOCATED CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORKERS

Over the past two years, we have been meeting with Los Angeles County law enforcement agencies to arrange co-locating DCFS staff at police stations. Co-location is an important part of a service delivery model that will ensure uniform best practices in investigating child abuse in households impacted by gangs and narcotics.



The Department of Children and Family services has co-located several children's social workers from SPA offices, Emergency Response Command Post (ERCP), and MART with the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department and numerous independent police agencies. A complete roster of law enforcement agencies that are or will host co-located social workers is attached.

The widely acknowledged epidemic of meth abuse in Los Angeles County requires that the Department of Children and Family Services take appropriate measures to protect children and families endangered by drug abuse. Through co-location:

- The Department of Children and Family Services DEC Coordinator will serve as the primary contact for and provide DEC training to co-located staff. Training will emphasize awareness and recognition of the methamphetamine epidemic. Staff will be encouraged to contact the DEC Coordinator upon receipt of a methamphetamine referral. The DEC Coordinator, will coordinate an expedited response and provide appropriate guidance.
- The Department will work to improve meth-related child abuse investigations. This will include working with law enforcement, County Counsel, District Attorney and City Attorney in developing a qualitative evaluation of different aspects of child abuse and MART investigations.
- The Department will develop a standardized protocol for co-located social workers and our law enforcement partners to ensure uniform best practices in handling joint child abuse and MART investigations. The protocol will guide coordination of joint activities, work, policies, training, and specific requests for assistance.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

Additional recommendations are to expand on the Point of Engagement and MART/DEC strategies through increased collaboration with the Department of Public Health's Alcohol and Drug Program Administration, the Departments of Mental Health and Public Social Services, the Probation and Sheriff's Departments, and State Parole offices, to integrate existing county contracts that provide alcohol and drug treatment intervention, mental health services for dual diagnosis (mental health/substance abuse), domestic violence as it relates to substance abuse, and other supportive services. The integration will strengthen our ability to access services and identify areas in need of expansion.

Point of Engagement and the MART/DEC programs have already demonstrated success in working with families affected by methamphetamine use through collaboration with various law enforcement agencies, local university based research institutions, local/ national best-practice alliances, substance abuse treatment providers, mental health providers and other community agencies, contracted family preservation and family support agencies and the faith-based community. To build on this success,

the Department will continue to work with the Departments of Mental Health, Public Social Services, Public Health and Sheriff to weave our services together to strengthen the community safety net.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

The Department of Children and Family Services looks forward to the continued partnership and expansion of the collaboration with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Public Social Services and independent law enforcement agencies, in addressing the meth epidemic and to provide a better treatment approach to ensure that children and families are provided with appropriate services.

The Department remains committed to the goal of ensuring the safety of children and the prompt response to the specific issue of methamphetamine and child abuse throughout the County. If you have any questions, please call me or your staff may contact Armand Montiel, Board Liaison, at (213) 351-5530.

PSP:AW:ER:mg

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

## CO-LOCATION SITES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law Enforcement	Address	City	Zip Code	Telephone number	DCFS Office	# of CSWs	# of Spaces	Status
<b>Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD):</b>								
Foothill Division	12760 Osborne St.	Pacoima		818/756-8861	MART	1	1	
Mission Division				818	Santa Clarita/ ERCP	1	1	
Rampart Division	2710 Temple St.	Los Angeles		213/485-4061	Metro North/ ERCP	1	1	Pending
*Southwest Division	1546 W. MLK Blvd.	Los Angeles		213/485-2582	Century/Haw./ERCP	1-2	1-2	Proposed
Southeast Division	145 W. 108th St.	Los Angeles	90061	213.485.6914	Compton/MART	2	2	
Wilshire Division	4861 W. Venice Blvd.	Los Angeles		213/485-4022	ERCP	1	1	
Van Nuys Division	6240 Sylmar Ave.	Van Nuys	91401	818/756-8343	N. Hollywood/ERCP	1	1	Proposed
Hollenbeck Area	2111 E. 1st	Los Angeles	90033	213/485-2942	Metro North/MART	1	1	Pending
LAPD - 77th Street Abused Child Unit	7600 Broadway	Los Angeles	90003	213/485-4648	Century/ Wateridge/ Hawthorne/ MART	2	2	Proposed
Hollywood Area	1358 N. Wilcox	Hollywood	90028	213/485-4302	MART & N Hollywood	1	1	Proposed
LAPD - Parker Center Abused Child Unit	150 N. Los Angeles St.	Los Angeles	90012	213/485-4220	Wateridge	1	1	Proposed
Mission Division								
<b>Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD):</b>								
*Century Station	11703 S. Alameda Bl.	Lynwood	90262	323/567-8121	Compton	unk	unk	Proposed
Compton Sheriff	301 W. Willowbrook	Compton	90220	562/605-6558 310/605-6500	Compton	1	1	Proposed
East Los Angeles	5019 E. Third St.	E. Los Angeles	90022	310/603-3118	Belvedere & ERCP	1	1	Proposed
Antelope Valley/ Lancaster	501 W. Lancaster Blv	Lancaster	93534	310/603-3118	Lancaster & Mart	unk	unk	Proposed
Lakewood	5130 N. Clark Ave.	Lakewood		562/866-9061	Santa Fe Springs	unk	unk	Proposed
City of Industry	150 N. Hudson Ave.	City of Industry	91744	310/603-3118	Glendora	2	2	Proposed
Carson	21356 S. Avalon Blvd.	Carson	90745	310/603-3118	Lakewood	1	1	Proposed

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

**\* Emergency Response Command Post (ERCP) sited**